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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 86 AS AMENDED**  
January 18, 2022  
**DOROTHY J. LENNIG, LEGAL CLINIC DIRECTOR**

The House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House Bill 86 would expand protections for victims of domestic violence who have residential leases. **We urge the Environment and Transportation Committee to adopt the proposed amendments, and report favorably on House Bill 86.**

In 2010, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation which permitted victims of domestic violence to, among other remedies, terminate a residential lease after providing notice to the landlord. This law greatly improved the safety and welfare of victims of domestic violence and their children. HB 86 would expand the avenues available to victims to be able to take advantage of this remedy. In addition to allowing a victim to use this provision by obtaining a protective order, it would allow the victim to have a Qualified Third Party issue a report indicating that the tenant is seeking assistance for domestic violence.

The House of Ruth has represented numerous clients who continue to feel unsafe in their homes because the abuser knows where the victim lives, is familiar with the area around the residence and how to come and go undetected, and may even know ways of entering the residence through windows or insecurely locked doors. Multiple of the House of Ruth's clients have continued to feel unsafe in their homes because the abuser's family members live in the same apartment complex or on the same block and provide information to the abuser about the victim's activities. In such cases, the only way for the victim and her children to be safe is to move to a location of which the abuser is unaware. This is only possible if the victim is able to terminate the existing lease so that she is no longer responsible for the leased premises. Passage of HB 86, as amended would expand this important remedy to victims of domestic violence.

**The House of Ruth urges the Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 86 as amended.**